

Cable
Text:

UNCLAS SOFIA 00252

CXsofia:

ACTION: POLEC

INFO: FAS LEG POLM RSO AID DCM FCS DAO PAO AMB

DISSEMINATION: POLE

CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:NMCELDOWNEY

DRAFTED: POLEC:JMACKWILSON

CLEARED: DCM: AKARAGIANNIS, POLEC: JBIGUS, DEA:RCASSITAS

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TO RUEABND/DEA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RHMCSSU/FBI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 0256

RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6023

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0530

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL KCOR KCRCM BU

SUBJECT: BULGARIA: THE CASE FOR A PERMANENT DEA OFFICE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A permanent DEA presence in Sofia makes strategic, policy and budgetary sense. Heroin from Afghanistan transits Bulgaria and other Balkan/Black Sea countries and poses a major policy and law enforcement concern to the United States and our European partners. Heroin trafficking routes are exploited for smuggling people, contraband and weapons - a confluence of security threats. Profits from drug trafficking help fuel corruption in Bulgaria, further weakening this strategic ally already beset by rule of law problems. The new government that emerges after the July 5 election will be anxious to establish credibility with us and international partners on the rule of law. The Embassy has available space and the cost of operating in Bulgaria is significantly lower than in other European countries. A permanent in-country DEA office at this critical time will push our anti-drug agenda in the region as well as within Bulgaria. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Afghan heroin transiting through the Black Sea littoral poses significant security, law enforcement and rule of law challenges to a vulnerable region. Strategically situated on Balkan transit routes, Bulgaria is awash in illegal flows of drugs, people, contraband, and money. Drug trafficking profits help fuel domestic corruption and organized crime, undercutting U.S. efforts to develop democratic institutions and rule of law programs.

¶3. (SBU) Once Bulgaria gets past its July parliamentary election, the new government will be anxious to establish credibility with the international community and the Bulgarian public on rule of law. A permanent DEA presence will have lasting impact by:

-- Establishing strategic depth in interdiction chokepoints, critical for operational effectiveness in the overall USG counter-narcotics strategy in the region.

-- Enhancing and strengthening the capacity of DEA's Bulgarian counterparts and trusted partners. Armed with strong extra-territorial legislation, DEA is uniquely positioned with a global mandate to combat drug trafficking. DEA's skills and expertise, when applied via a permanent presence, will provide continuity and oversight to joint operations and develop Bulgaria's national capacity. Its key planning, investigative, intelligence-gathering and training component will bring DEA's

superior skills, expertise and tactics to bear.

-- Accelerating Bulgarian progress on establishing a Vetted Unit of investigators and operatives, a key USG policy goal. We will help the Bulgarians create a larger cadre of trustworthy officers and staff.

14. (SBU) U.S. Embassy Sofia is home to over a dozen foreign affairs agencies, many with regional responsibilities. We have significant available space within a new chancery complex, and the costs of operating here are substantially lower than elsewhere in Europe. At the same time, direct air flights to capitals throughout the region (both east and west) are readily available.

15. (SBU) Comment: DEA's intermittent TDY presence has helped, but is insufficient. A strong, consistent and permanent DEA presence is essential to achieve our counter-narcotics goals here. It will help Bulgaria be a stronger and more capable partner, while also enabling DEA to mount additional joint operations. The strategic benefits are clear, the budgetary impact small, and the operational impact high.

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